

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN



barry smith

THE BLACK HOUND & VENGEANCE!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

The Black Hound of VENGEANCE!

THE
AFTERMATH
OF BATTLE!

A TIME TO SCRAMBLE
BACK ABOARD THE
TURANIAN DRAGON-
PROWS WHICH LURCH
AND CHURN IN THE
WATERS OFF BESIEGED
MARAKET.

A TIME FOR THE FIRST
GASPED TELLINGS OF
DEEDS WHICH SHALL
GROW INTO LEGEND...
FOR THE CLEANSING OF
BLOOD-CAKED SWORDS...

...AND FOR THE
LICKING OF THOSE
WOUNDS WHICH
ARE OF THE BODY...!

STAN LEE
PRESENTS:

ROY THOMAS & BARRY SMITH
WRITER/EDITOR & ARTIST

DAN ADKINS
EMBELLISHER

JOHN COSTANZA
LETTERER

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURES OF
THE HERO CREATED BY
ROBERT E. HOWARD

A TIME, TOO, FOR WONDERING ASSENTLY AT THE ERRANT FATE WHICH HAS LED A HOMELESS BARBARIAN INTO THE SERVICE OF A GREAT EASTERN EMPIRE...

AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE? TO RESTORE TO HIS RIGHTFUL TEMPLE IN TURAN A KIDNAPED MAN-GOD... THE SO-CALLED TARMIM INCARNATE...

...AND TO RAZE TO THE GROUND THE PROUD CITY WHICH HAS DARED CLAIM THAT GODLING FOR ITS OWN!

YOU! NORTH-LANDER!

NOW WHAT?

MY NAME IS ALAFNAL... AND I WISHED TO THANK YOU, CIMMERIAN, FOR SLAYING THE MIRROR-DEMON THAT THINNED OUR RANKS.

MY NAME IS CONAN, SOLDIER...

AND I DO WHAT I WAS PAID TO DO.

NO MORE.



THE WOUNDED ARE PILED IN HEAPS UPON THE DARK-STAINED BOARDS, LIKE SCARCELY-LIVING SACRIFICES BEFORE THE WOODEN, ONE-ARMED IMAGE OF THE CAPTIVE TARMIM...



AN EDUCATED MAN, EVEN IN THIS WARLIKE HYBORIAN AGE, MIGHT FIND WORLDS OF MEANINGS IN THE SCENE.

BUT BLACK-MANED CONAN MERELY SKIMS THE SAUNT, TORMENTED

FACES WHOSE PAIN HE COULD NEVER ALLAY...



...SCANS THEM, LOOKING FOR ONE FACE ONLY... ONE BULKY FORM...



...SECKS... AND FINDS.

FARNIR!

HELLO...
LITTLE
MAN...



HOW GOES IT,
VANIRMAN? THAT
FLAMING ARROW
WHICH FELL YOU...

--DIDN'T QUITE
HAVE MY NAME
SCRAWLED ON IT,
IT SEEMS.

THOUGH
IT MIGHT AS
WELL HAVE.



AH, CONAN,
CONAN... IT'S
A FOOL
THING I'VE
DONE...

TRAVELING HALF-
WAY 'ROSS THE
WORLD... TO DIE
AT THE HAND OF
A MAN I'LL NEVER
SEE...

...A MAN WHO
THREW BLAZING
DEATH FROM AFAR!



ENOUGH
TALK OF
DYING. YOU
SEEM WELL
ENOUGH
TO ME.

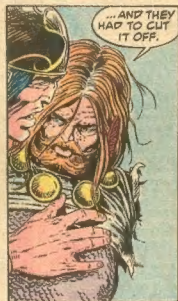
I'LL CART
YOU TO WHERE
YOU'LL BE
AMONG THE
LIVING, MAN...

LIVING,
PERHAPS...
BUT NO
LONGER
QUITE A
MAN.

I FELL,
CONAN... MUCH
FOUL WATER
GOT INTO MY
WOUND...



...IT MIXED WITH THE
BURN IN MY LEFT
ARM...



...AND THEY
HAD TO CUT
IT OFF.



NOW, GO AWAY...
AND PLAY WITH
YOUR BATTLE
TOYS, LITTLE
MAN.

OLD
FARNIR...
NEEDS
HIS...
REST...



EVENING COMES, WITHOUT
A RENEWAL OF THE CONFLICT
'TWEEN SHIPS AND SHORE...

AND
A GRIM
CONAN
KEEPS
SQUARE
WATCH
OVER A
SLEEPING
FRIEND



NO, BARBARIAN! A PRINCE
YEZDIGERD WANTS TO
SEE YOU... NOW!

AND IF I DON'T
WANT TO SEE
HIM, BALTHAZ?

YOU WILL--IF
YOU WANT REVENGE
FOR THIS DAY'S
SLAUGHTER.



I THOUGHT THAT
WOULD STIR YOU.

WARM, EH?
IT'S YOUR
HAIR--TOO
LONG FOR
THIS ACCURSED
CLIMATE.

SAY THE
WORD, AND
I'LL TRIM
IT FOR
YOU.

BALTHAZ...
I'D NOT
WANT YOUR
BLADE THAT
NEAR MY
THROAT.

I'LL JUST ~~FIX~~ IT
BACK, TILL I FIND
SOMEONE I TRUST
TO CUT IT...



...WHICH MAY WELL
BE, TILL I GET
BACK HOME TO
GYMNERIA.



WE ARE ~~HERE~~,
O PRINCE...AND
STAND READY FOR
THE MISSION
OF WHICH YOU
HAVE SPOKEN.



EXCELLENT. OUR
CONTACT IN
THE CITY HAS
SENT WORD OF
A WHARF THAT
WILL BE UN-
GUARDED.



GO.
THEN.

IT IS CUSTOMARY, MY
PRINCE, FOR A COMMANDER
TO SPEAK THE BLESSING
OF TARIM BEFORE--



OH YES...I
FORGOT.

'MAY GREAT
TARIM
WATCH
OVER
YOU.'

NOW
GO!

NOT SO FAST,
TURANIAN. NO ONE
HAS TOLD ME
OF ANY MISSION...



WHY, IT'S TO STEAL
INTO MAKKALET,
OF COURSE--INTO
ITS HOLY OF
HOLIES...



I CARE LITTLE
FOR GODS SO
WEAK THEY CAN
BE CAPTURED.



BUT I HAVE SEEN WHAT
HYRKANIAN ARROWS
DID TO FAFNIR...

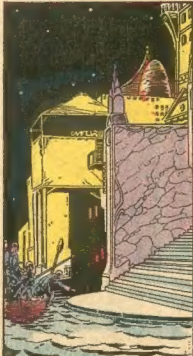


SUIT YOURSELF.
BUT DON'T BE SO
WISY ABOUT IT...



...SO I'LL
COME WITH
YOU FOR
REASONS
ALL MY
OWN.

EVEN THE DULLARDS
OF MAKKALET
COULDN'T SLEEP
THRU THAT HARSH,
UNTUTORED VOICE
OF YOURS....





TARIM'S
BLOOD!

IT WAS--A
TRAP!



FIGHT BRAVELY
AND WELL,
BROTHERS!

WE'LL LET THESE
SCUM OF THE EAST
KNOW THEY'VE BEEN
IN A FIGHT!



BALTHAZ, YOU'VE
LIVED TOO LONG
IN THE SOFT
COURTS OF
AGHRAPUR.

THERE ARE NO MORE OF
THEM THAN THERE
ARE OF US--

AND THEY
DIE JUST AS
EASILY, TOO!



I DON'T THINK
IT WAS A TRAP,
AT ALL-- JUST
A FEW GUARDS-
MEN WHO
STUMBLED
UPON US.

NOW COME! WE'LL
LET A FEW MEN STAY
BEHIND, TO KEEP
THOSE DOGS FROM
SOUNDING THE
ALARM.

THIS MISSION
IS MINE TO
COMMAND,
UNBELIEVER--NOT
YOURS.

STILL,
YOUR
POINT IS
WELL
PUT.



ALAFDHAL... KERIM
BEY... BARBARIAN!
YOU THREE
COME WITH ME!

THOSE OTHERS
HAVE... ELSE-
WHERE TO
VISIT.

YOU
SEEM TO
KNOW MUCH
ABOUT THIS
CITY YOU'VE
NEVER SEEN
BEFORE...



AND, THIS CONTACT
OF WHOM YEZDIGERD
SPOKE...

...IS NONE OF YOUR
AFFAIR, CIMMERIAN, SO--

HOLD!



MORE GUARDS-
MEN!



YOU--ALAFDHAL--
THEY TELL ME
YOU'RE GOOD
WITH THAT KNIFE
OF YOURS.

I WANT TO
SEE NOW
GOOD!

YES,
SIRE...



...I'M THIS GOOD!



NOW, WHILE THEY
ARE STUNNED--
ATTACK, MY
BROTHERS! KILL
WITHOUT MERCY!

NO! SPARE
THE ONE
WHO HOLDS
HIS FALLEN
FRIEND!



I'VE TOLD YOU
BEFORE, SAVAGE--
NO ONE BUT BALTHAZ
COMMANDS THIS
MISSION.

AND I
SAID--
NO
MERCY!



ONLY MAD DOGS
AND TURANIANS
KILL WITHOUT
REASON, IT
SEEMS.

WE'LL DISCUSS
THIS MATTER
AGAIN, ONE
DAY.

RIGHT
NOW--
I'M TOO
BUSY.



MAN OF MAKKALET--
WE KNOW WELL YOUR
TEMPLE LIES NEARBY.
WHERE IS IT?

I-I'M DAMNED
FOREVER-- IF I
TELL--!

AND YOU
DIE NOW
IF YOU
DON'T!



DON'T TOY
WITH HIM,
FOOL! SLICE
OFF AN EAR,
AND HE'LL--

THAT'S YOUR
STYLE, BALTHAZ--
NOT MINE.

STILL...

NO!
WAIT!



YONDER LIES
THE TEMPLE OF
TARIM! YONDER!!



THAT CLOUD
ON THE HEAD
WILL KEEP THE
DOG QUIET
FOR THE
NIGHT.

THEN--
LET US
GO!



MEANWHILE, THE OTHERS
OF THE PARTY HAVE MADE
THEIR STEALTHY WAY TO
MAKKALET'S WALL OF
ARCHERS...

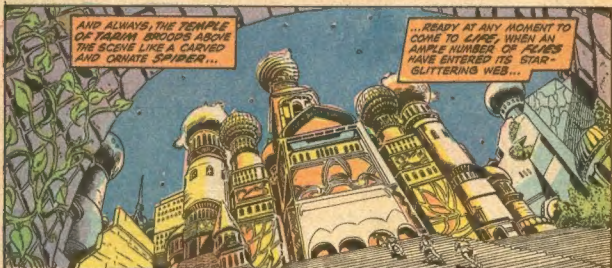
...WHERE
THEY
PROVE THAT
TURANIANS
HAVE
MEMORIES...



...SHARP AS
THEIR KNIVES!



AT CLOSER RANGE, HOWEVER...IT IS SOMEWHAT LESS EFFECTIVE.



AND ALWAYS, THE TEMPLE
OF TARIM BROODS ABOVE
THE SCENE LIKE A CARVED
AND ORNATE SPIDER...

...READY AT ANY MOMENT TO
COME TO LIFE, WHEN AN
AMPLE NUMBER OF FLIES
HAVE ENTERED ITS STAR-
GLITTERING WEB...



TARIM IS WITH
US TONIGHT.
SURELY, THIS
PROVES HE
DESIRES
RESCUE.

BALTHAZ,
I'M SICK TO
DEATH OF
HEARING "TARIM
THIS" AND
"TARIM THAT."

MAKALET WASN'T
PREPARED FOR
WAR, THAT'S ALL.

YOU'LL LEARN
THE TARIM'S TRUE
GODHOOD, DOG...



...WHEN HE SITS IN
JUDGMENT OVER
YOU, AFTER YOUR
DEATH!

THEN I'LL
WORRY ABOUT
HIM THEN...

...NOT
NOW!



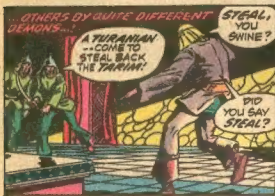
NAN! THAT PRIEST-
WIZARD KHARAM-
AKKAD GUARDS
HIS UPSTART TEMPLE
POORLY.



THIS PLACE
IS QUIET AS
A TOMB.

THEN
LET US
MARS,
MAN...

...THAT
IT RESEMBLES
A TOMB IN NO
OTHER WAY!



AS FOR THE ARCHERS: THEY'VE BEEN TAKEN CARE OF, BETTER THAN CONAN YET SUSPECTS...



EVEN NOW, A HASTY TORCH IS BEING SET TO THE ROOF AND ITS GRISLY CONTENTS...



FROM HIS FLAGSHIP, YEZDGERD SEES THE GRIM FUNERAL PYRE...



HE SMILES...

...AND MAKES A TASTELESS JEST WE'LL NOT RECOUNT.

NAN? MOCK BOTH BALTHAZ AND THE TARIK INCARNATE, WOULD THEY?

WELL, NEITHER OF THEM WILL EVER MOCK ANYTHING AGAIN.

NOW, I'LL REJOIN THAT BARBARIAN LOU AND MY TWO UNDER-LINGS, SO THAT--



THE SUDDEN SCREAM FROM 'BALTHAZ' LEFT IS LIKE NOTHING HUMAN...



...NOR IS THAT WHICH SHATTERS THE BLACK SILENCE OFF TO HIS RIGHT.



YET, ON THE INSTANT, BALTHAZ INSTINCTIVELY KNOWS THAT HE IS ALONE IN THIS TEMPLE FAR FROM HOME...



...ALONE, BUT FOR THE NATED CIMMERIAN...

...AND WHATEVER THING RIPPED INHUMAN SCREAMS FROM DYING THROATS!

CONAN, TOO, HAS HEARD THESE GURSLING DEATH-BATTLES...



...AND STANDS AS IF READY TO FLEE THE CHAMBER BEFORE HIM, AS IF TO ENTER IT.



AT LENGTH, HOWEVER, CURIOSITY WINS THE DAY...



CURIOSITY... THE HEAVY OOD OF BURNING INCENSE...

...AND THE SIGHT OF A GLEAMING SWORD, IN RUBY-ENCRUSTED SCABBARD, SLUNG OVER A GREAT, UN-GUARDED SHIELD.



AMPLE BONUS FOR A HARD NIGHT'S WORK...

...HE INDEED HE LIVES TO COLLECT IT!

DO THEY LET THIEVES,
NOW, INTO THE HOUSE
OF TARIM?



WHO ARE
YOU,
WOMAN?

TELL ME
QUICKLY, NOW--
AND NONE OF YOUR
SCREAMING--



--OR ONE TURN OF
MY WRIST WILL
SNAP THAT PRETTY
NECK!



CALMER NOW, EH?
GOOD... FOR I'M NO
THIEF!

HOW DARE YOU LAY HANDS
ON ME, YOU--YOU--

AND WHY
SHOULD I NOT
LAY HANDS ON
A TEMPLE
WENCH--



--UNLESS YOU'RE
MORE THAN THAT--?

NO. NO MORE.
JUST... A
TEMPLE
WENCH.

MY NAME
IS... CAISSA.



BUT AS FOR YOUR NOT BEING A
THIEF...

IS KHARAM-AKKAD
IN THE HABIT OF
SIVING AWAY
SWORDS OF
STATE TO MEN
WHO SPEAK OUR
TONGLE WITH
NORTHERN
ACCENTS?



OH, I WAS
TAKING
THE SWORD,
ALL RIGHT...

BUT I'M A
SOLDIER,
NOT A
THIEF.

AND I DON'T
HAVE TO
ANSWER FOR
MY ACTIONS
TO A TEMPLE
WENCH!



AS ELSEWHERE
BENEATH THE
HYRREANIAN
MOON...



A MAN
SIGHS,
DEEP AND
LONG

AND, IF NOT
FOR THE
GOLDEN
WREATH
AROUND HIS
WRINKLED BROW



WHO
WOULD
EVER SUSPECT
THAT HE WAS
KING IN
MAKKALET?

NO, LYKAS. BACK FROM THE CAMP
OF MY COMMANDERS, - SEE!



HOW
GOES
IT ON THE
PAMPER'S?

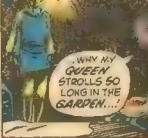
NOT WELL,
MY LORD.

SWIFT-LEGGED
RUMOR SAYS THAT
TURANIAN'S HAVE
INFILTRATED THE
CITY.



...AND
THAT.

ARE YOU
LISTENING,
SURE?



WHY MY
QUEEN
STROLLS SO
LONG IN THE
GARDEN...

EH? OH YES,
YES... I WAS
MERELY
WONDERING...



A FINE SWORD...

MUCH PINTER THAN MY OWN.

I'LL KEEP THIS ONE, THIEF OR NOT.

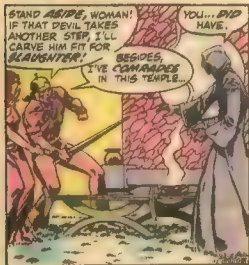


KEEP IT-- OR YOUR LIFE-- BUT NOT BOTH!!



YOU-- WIZARD! HERE!?

AND WHERE ELSE SHOULD A HIGH PRIEST BE-- SAVE IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE?



STAND ASIDE, WOMAN! IF THAT DEVIL TAKES ANOTHER STEP, I'LL CARVE HIM FIT FOR SLAUGHTER!

YOU... DID HAVE.

BESIDES, COMRADES IN THIS TEMPLE...



BUT NOW, THEY WALK A DIFFERENT, DARKER PATH...



...THE WAY OF THE BLACK HOUND!



AN! COME ONE OF HELL'S VANGUARDS NOW-- TO ESCORT YOU UP THE MOUNTAIN OF DEATH, WHICH LIES TO THE EAST!

TAKE HIS HAND, WHY DON'T YOU?

GROW!

OR WILL YOU FEEL ME, IN YOUR BARBAROUS ACCENTS..



...HOW YOU'LL SLAUGHTER THE ALREADY-DEAD?



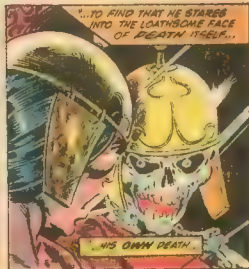
THAT THING MAY BE A MIRROR-IMAGE, LIKE THE OTHERS-- OR HE MAY NOT.



STAND STILL, IN THE NAME OF MACHA AND MORRIGAN!

ARE YOU A PRIEST-- OR SOME LEPROUS GREY TOAD OUT OF SYLSA?

BUT YOU'RE REAL ENOUGH, SO--





BY CROM! WHAT HAVE I STUMBLED INTO?



MIRRORS...



THE DEVIL'S WORK IS MOSTLY DONE WITH MIRRORS, IT SEEMS...



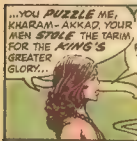
...MIRRORS WHICH SEE THRU SOFT FLESH, TO REVEAL THE GLEAMING BONE BENEATH!

HOW CAN TURANIAN STEEL EVER HOPE TO PREVAIL AGAINST SUCH SORCERY?



A QUERY NOT REPAIRED

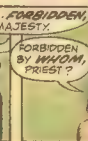
...BY NIGHT SAVE A DIMLY PERCEIVED LIGHT.



...YOU PUZZLE ME, KHARAM-AKKAD, YOUR MEN STOLE THE TARIM FOR THE KING'S GREATER GLORY...

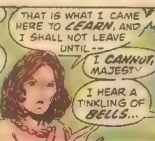


YET EVEN WE HAVE NEVER BEEN PERMITTED TO SEE HIM!



IT IS... FORBIDDEN, MAJESTY.

FORBIDDEN BY WHOM, PRIEST?



THAT IS WHAT I CAME HERE TO LEARN, AND I SHALL NOT LEAVE UNTIL --

I CANNOT, MAJESTY

I HEAR A TINKLING OF BELLS...



WAIT!



THEY PLAY A TUNE WHICH I ALONE CAN TRULY SAVOR.

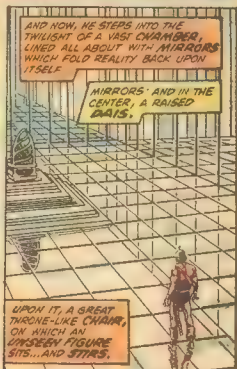
A MOST CLEAR AND PLEASANT DIRGE.



COWAN, TOO, HAS HEARD THE TINY, SINGING BELLS.



...BELLS WHICH SEEM TO DANCE INVISIBLY BEFORE HIM, AS HE DRAWS NEAR THE SHIMMERING LIGHT.



AND NOW, HE STEPS INTO THE TWILIGHT OF A VAST CHAMBER, LINED ALL ABOUT WITH MIRRORS WHICH FOLD REALITY BACK UPON ITSELF

MIRRORS AND IN THE CENTER, A RAISED Dais.

UPON IT, A GREAT THRONE-LIKE CHAIR, ON WHICH AN UNSEEN FIGURE SITS...AND STIRS.

CONAN'S OWN MUFFLED BREATHING IS THE LOUDEST SOUND IN THE CHAMBER, AS HE STRIDES FORWARD... SLOWLY, UNSURELY, YET FOR ALL THAT LIKE SOME SLEEK NORTHERN PANTHER.



SOMEHOW... HE CANNOT KNOW HOW... HE IS CERTAIN IT IS THE ROOM INCARNATE... THE CAPTIVE MAN-GOD FOR WHOM A WAR RAGES... WHO SITS THAT MARBLE DAIS.

BUT WHETHER A MAN MAY DYE FOR DARING TO LOOK UPON A GOD THAT, CONAN CANNOT SAY.



AND SO, SWORD RAISED...

...HE STEPS CLOSER...

CLOSER...

HE PARTS HIS LIPS TO SPEAK...

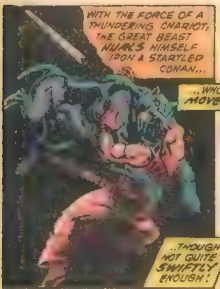
AT THE FIRST WHISPERED SYLLABLE...

...THE MIRROR FLOOR BECOMES A GREAT AND BESTIAL MAW...

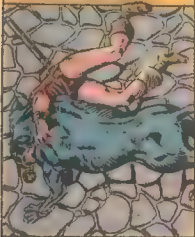
...AND THERE IS BIKENCE ONCE MORE IN THE TEMPLE OF MARQUELT.

SILENCE FOUNTAINING SILENCE SILENCE SILENCE...

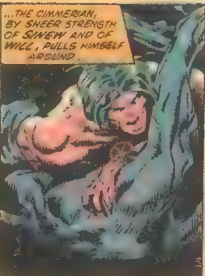
CONAN FALLS TO CONAN NO MORE SWIFTLY...



THEN, EVEN AS BEAR-TRAP JAWS
FASTEN THEMSELVES GREEDILY
UPON HIS UPPER ARM...



...THE CIMMERIAN,
BY SHEER STRENGTH
OF SINEW AND OF
WILL, PULLS HIMSELF
AROUND...



TILL HE IS
ATOP THE
FRITCHING,
WRITHING
DEVIL-HOUND!



THEN, WITH A
MIGHTY JERK
WHICH RENDS
FLESH AND
FANG ALIKE...

CONAN IS
FREE!



FREE,
AND
LUNGING
FOR HIS
SWORD...

GRASP-
ING IT...



EVEN AS THREE HUNDRED
POUNDS OF HIGH-RABID
FURY COMES MURTLING
TOWARD HIM...



...TO IMPALE ITSELF HUNGRILY UPON A
MAN-MADE TALON!



WITH A SINGLE SURGE
OF MOTION, CONAN FLUNG
THE REVEREND THING
FROM HIM...



BUT, THOUGH WOUNDED TO THE
QUICK, IT DOES NOT DIE!

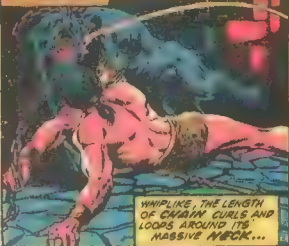
IT TURNS--AS
CONAN'S FINGERS
CLOSE AROUND
THE FETTERS
BENEATH HIS
LEG--



...AND TURNING--LEAPS!



BUT, SWIFT THOUGH THE PAIN-MADDENED BEAST MAY BE-- THIS TIME, THE MAN IS SWIFTER YET!

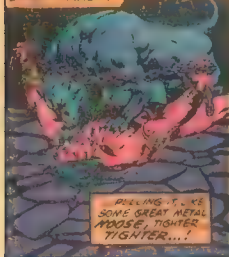


WHIPLIKE, THE LENGTH OF CHAIN CURLS AND LOOPS AROUND ITS MASSIVE NECK...



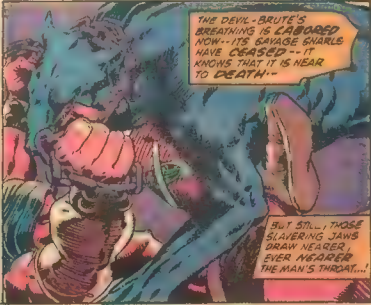
AND NOW-- THE BATTLE TRULY BEGINS!

STRIVING TO IGNORE THE AGONY DEALT BY RAKING CLAWS, CONAN GRASPS ONE END OF THE CHAIN IN EITHER HAND...



PEELING IT, HE SOME GREAT METAL MOOSE, TIGHTER TIGHTER...!

THE DEVIL-BRUTE'S BREATHING IS LABORED NOW-- ITS SAVAGE GARGLES HAVE CEASED-- IT KNOWS THAT IT IS NEAR TO DEATH--



BUT STILL, THOSE SLAYING JAWS DRAW NEARER, EVER NEARER THE MAN'S THROAT...!

ALL CONAN CAN SEE IS THE BLACK OF THE MOUTH--



-- AND THE HILT OF HIS SWORD!

ONE FINAL TUG-- THEN SUDDENLY HE DROPS ONE END OF THE CHAIN..

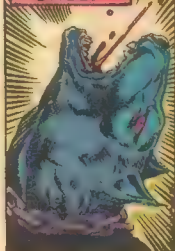


A MIGHTY HAND SEEKS OUT THE DEEP-IMBEDDED BLADE...



...AND IMBEDS IT...

...MORE DEEPLY STILL!



FOR ONE ETERNAL INSTANT, THE MONSTER STILL LOOMS ABOVE THE FALTERING YOUTH... AS IF IMPERVIOUS TO -ARM-

THEN, DARK-FINGERED DEATH CLAIMS HIS OWN...

AND, WITH A THROATY GRUNT, CONAN HURLS THE LIMP CARCASS FROM HIM.

FOR LONG MINUTES, NOTHING MOVES WITHIN THE NIGHTED CHAMBER. THEN...

AND NOW, WITH AN EFFORT WHICH RACKS EACH MOVEMENT WITH SOUL- FELT PAIN, CONAN BEGINS TO CRAWL... TO PULL... TO INCH HIS TORTURED BODY AWAY FROM THE FALLEN MOUND, TOWARD SOME DISTANT SOUND, WHICH THROBS FIRST SOFTLY, NOW MORE LOUDLY IN HIS FEVERED BRAIN...

SO... YOU WERE A TRUE BEAST AFTER ALL.

I BEGAN... TO WONDER...

...TO FIND HIMSELF RESTING ON ROCKY BLUFFS WHICH GIRD ONE END OF MAKKALET...

...THE WAR-FLEET OUT OF AGHRAPUR:

AND, SEEING THOSE PROUD DRAGON-BEAKS HIS MIND LEAPS INSTANTLY TO ANOTHER...

TO ONE LIKE- WISE SORELY WOUNDED WHO NOW HAS NO ARM TO ACHE WITH THROBBING PAIN...

BLUFFS WHICH LOOK DOWN GRIMLY UPON

I... AM COMING... FAFNIR.

• EPILOGUE •



The waning moon shimmered above the lipid waters like a madman's lantern. Slowly, with great laborious strokes, the barbarian swam toward the proud flagship of Yezdigerd, prince of all Turan.



Fingers trembling from more than chill night air, deck hands hauled him aboard.

The bone-weary Cimmerian was still shaking himself, like a dog fresh from its bath, when a furtive whisper assailed his ears: "Your red-bearded friend is dead." Conan took two breaths. Then: "How?" His eyes said much more.

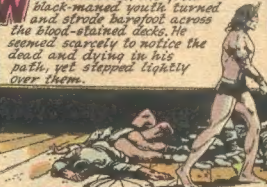


It was Balthaz' doing. He came back not an hour ago, and angrily commanded that the dead be thrown overboard. The Vanirman, as well. "But Fafnir was not dead?" "Not then. Not yet. But he surely is by now."

Without a word, the grim black-maned youth turned and strode barefoot across the blood-stained decks. He seemed scarcely to notice the dead and dying in his path, yet stepped lightly over them.



From the prow of the ship, where he was supervising the last disposings, Balthaz saw him coming. Only the raising of an eyelid betrayed his surprise.



It was Conan who spoke first. "Why?" That was all he said. Those standing but a few feet away could barely hear the soft thunder of the word. "He was dying anyway." The reply fairly reeked with ill-disguised contempt. "What use to feed and coddle a one-armed old fool?"



A thin, tight smile played for a moment on Balthaz' lips. Lightly, he fingered the ornate dirk at his belt. "Now go," he leered. "Or else I'll teach you what it means to challenge the orders of one who stands high in the favor of Yezdigerd himself--you, who fled Makkatei without so much as a sword to call your own!" For an instant, silence hung heavy in the air.



Then --

AAHGGG

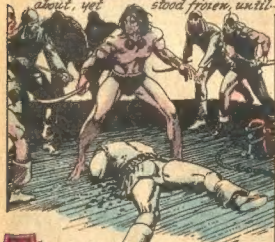
More swiftly than eye could follow or hand could prevent, the Turanian's silver dirk left its gaudy scabbard...

And plunged into its owner's heart!

Balthaz was still slumping lifeless toward the deck as Conan pulled his scimitar likewise from its sheath. Soldiers ringed him about, yet stood frozen, until--

Slay him!" It was Verdigord himself who spoke.

Stung into obedience by their prince's crisp command, the soldiers moved haltingly forward. But they were slow, uncertain. And Conan was like a lion among sheep.



Then, only one bright-clad figure stood between the barbarian and the waves which tapped steadily below.

"Halt, savage!" Verdigord, command!

The answer rumbled across the deck, like distant thunder. But this time, all still left alive could hear it.

"Get out of my way!"

Verdigord was slow to move, until a scimitar's slash across his cheek sent him reeling backward.



Then, Conan dropped the thin curved sword.



And, amid a mighty hail of spears and death-tipped arrows, he leaped headlong into the open arms of the waiting, dark-eyed sea!

Fin

THE HYBORIAN PAGE

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 625 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

SPECIAL BARBARIAN BULLETIN: Due to the number of brand-new titles and features we've been tossing at you of late, we've had no room on our regular Bullpen Page to print the results of the 1971 Shazam awards — those coveted lightning-shaped statuettes given out by the comic industry itself to those among it who it feels have contributed creatively to the graphic-story form during the previous year.

Thus, instead of the expected comments on the "Frost Giant's Daughter" reprint in *CONAN* #16, we'll delay those (plus comments on Gil Kane's phantasmagorical fill-in issues) till next time and fill you in on the winners here and now, before it's time for the '72 ceremony! Here goes...

ITEM! We said we'd give it to you straight — and here it is! On May 30 just past, the famous Academy of Comic Book Arts held its second annual 1971 Awards Dinner, at which were presented its shiny and prestigious Shazam awards. We don't know about our Distinguished Competitors, but we've sworn to print a full list of the winners each and every year, so here goes — with a bit of appropriate commentary here and there:

First off, the Best Continuing Feature award went to Marvel's own *CONAN THE BARBARIAN* — a fitting tribute to the hard work which goes into each and every issue of that most unique magazine. Best Individual Story award went to "Snowbirds Don't Fly" in *GREEN LANTERN* #85.

In the Dramatic division, NEAL ADAMS was named best penciler (which makes us all the more eager to see the artwork on that new series he's working on for Marvel), DICK GIORDANO best inker — both repeats, While Marvel's own ROY THOMAS was tapped for best writer, largely on the basis of his work

on *CONAN* and *THE AVENGERS*. (Yep, there's a Humorous division, too — with JOHN ALBANO named best writer, Archie-illustrator DAN DECARLO best penciler, and HENRY SCARPELLI best inker. And you can see handsome Hank's work on display in the latest issue of *HARVEY*, if you like.)

Best Letterer award went to GASPAR SALADINO — not a familiar name to most Marvel boosters, but still the guy who's designed most of our far-out new logos over the past year. And TATIANA WOOD was named Best Colorist.

There were a few other awards, too. WILL EISNER, creator of the *Spirit*, was elected as the 1971 entry to ACBA's Hall of Fame; JACK KIRBY won an award for Special Achievement by an Individual; Britisher FRANK BELLAMY (who draws the English version of "Star Trek" for a weekly magazine there) was named best Foreign Artist; while MIKE KALUTA and underground comic artist RICHARD CORBEN tied for the New Talent kudos.

Oh yes — and Marvel madman GIL KANE won a Special Recognition award

for his paperback comic-novel *Blackmark!*

Well, that's it for this time around, people! See you next year for ACBA — see you next paragraph for Marvel...



And, just because we feel we SHOULD every issue or so, here's Robert E. Howard's own MAP of the Hyborian world — with the besieged city of MAK-KALET discreetly added for your edification and enlightenment. Enjoy.



GANGWAY, WORLD! MADCAP MARVEL MARCHES MERRILY ON!

STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

Know something? We Bulpenners are so excited about all the new mags we're creating for you that I don't know which to talk about first. So, instead of beating the drums for **CLAWS OF THE CAT**, **JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY**, **JUNGLE ACTION**, **GUN-HAWKS**, **NIGHT NURSE**, **DOC SAVAGE**, or **SHANNA**, **THE SHE-DEVIL** — I'm not even gonna mention 'em! I'll leave it to Rascally Roy to clue you in elsewhere on this page, now and in following issues. Instead, I'll just take another few secs to say "Hi" to all the great guys and gals I met during my most recent lecture tour at the Nassau Community College, the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, Nashville Tennessee's Vanderbilt U., and good ol' Montana State. And, in case you think that the mighty Marvel craze is just a passing fad, you'd change your mind faster than Spidey can wiggle a web if you could have shared the wondrous welcomes at those hallowed halls of learning! (See? That'll prove I really can write a couple of sentences without plugging one of our titanic titles — titles such as **WYATT EARP**, **GOTHIC THRILLERS**, **SPOOF** — aw, forgive me, gang. This is a heckuva way for a Dr. of Comicology to behave!)

Exclusion

5/24

ITEM! Mid as if we let you in on still another facet of just what goes on behind the scenes and in the minds of that amorphous entity we call the Mighty Marvel Bullpen? We didn't think so. Anyway, for years now, we've wanted to start a comic-mag which dealt exclusively with the derring-do of a gal superstar, instead of the usual hunk of masculine muscle. So, recently, Stan and Ray sat down to discuss what kind of book they should put out — and guess what! They came up with no less than three vastly different concepts, each of which they dug so much they ended up sticking all three on this summer's hectic schedule — two which debut this month, plus another that'll wing your way next time around!

First and foremost of these new speculators just has to be the far-out new feature we call: THE CLAWS OF THE CAT! And if the title doesn't tell you that it's destined to be one of the most action-packed, most talked-about new magics of this or any other year, we'll burn our vintage MMMS cards! What's more, THE CAT is drawn by none other than MARIE SEVERIN — and written by former Marvel staffer LINDA FITE, to boot! (At least this time, nobody's gonna be able to write in and say we've got artists and writers who don't understand the female of the species!) Also on sale right now is LINDA CARTER, NIGHT NURSE, drawn by longtime pro WINS LOW MORTIMER and scripted by Roy's

own lovely lady, JEANIE THOMAS. Yeah, we know—it sounds like just another romance mag, however well-written and drawn; but take it from us, friend—this one is realistic, exciting—and different! And next month sees the dramatic debut of SHANNA, THE SHE-DEVIL—starring perhaps the most beautiful and offbeat jungle heroine in the history of the graphic arts! GEORGE TUSKA is penciling that one, and it's being penned by longtime comix buff CAROL SEULING. That's right, effendi—three great new mags, all written by gals—yet aimed neither at gals nor at guys, but at true lovers of comix literature everywhere! Try 'em—*you'll like 'em!*

TEMI if you've latched onto the brand new premiere issue of CHAMBER OF CHILLS, Marvel's newest and most nightmarish weird-type entry — of if you dug last month's JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #1 — then doubtless you've noticed that we've added something a wee bit new to this kind of anthology title! For the foreseeable future (and we've got a zingy new crystal ball!), virtually each and every issue of these two mags, plus the fast-upcoming GOTHIC THRILLERS already in the works, will headline an eerie adaptation of a masterpiece by a major fantasy author! JOURNEY #1 featured a tale by the late great ROBERT HOWARD, creator of Conan and Kull — and the first issue of CHAMBER features a story by world-famed author HARLAN ELLISON, whose recent *Again, Dangerous Visions* hardcover volume is already destined to become one of the great s-f works of the 70's! Also on hand in near-future issues of our terror-laden triumvirate will be the likes of THEODORE STURGEON, ROBERT BLOCH (author of *Psycho*), and a whole horde of the greatest names in imaginative fiction! They'll be backed up by plenty of original stories as well, written by some of the finest sripters in the history of comic — and together, they're gonna knock you right out of your haunted house!

ITEM! You see a few new names in our credit-captions this time around. We'll let you seek 'em out for yourself—but here's a bit of background: IRV WESLEY, a former Bullpen great in the fabulous 50's, has returned to the fold to help us out with the latest saga of one of our most unique heroes! Then there's a lad named CRAIG RUSSELL, who works with oldtimer DAN ADKINS out in the wilds of Ohio! Oh yes, and how could we forget JIM STARLIN, a talented newcomer who's also been assisting JOHN ROMITA on Spidey's recent capers! Jim, by the way, was brought to Marvel by another of its new lights, RICH BUCKLER! Face it, friends and neighbors—Stan was telling it like it is when he said that the whole Marvel gang was turned on by all the new mags and new projects we've got up our collective sleeve! In fact, the latest word around the Bullpen is that when you work for mighty Marvel, you're not just an artist—you're also a talent scout!

MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST
NOW ON SALE!

NOW ON SALE

A Generous Grab-bag of Galvanizin' Goodies!

SPIDER-MAN #114: Spidey's got a spanking-new ulcer, right? And he's caught smack-dab in the middle of a gang war between Doc Ock and Hammerhead, right? So does that clue you in about which Marvel mag is definitely one of the wildest, woolliest chillers of the month? Right!

THOR #205: The Thunder God vs. Mephisto—in the haunted halls of the Sub-World! And the demon's allies are none other than Thor's most trusted friends—including the lady Sif! Get it!

CAPTAIN AMERICA & THE FALCON
#155: So you think you know all about the beginnings of our star-spangled stalwart? Well, wait'll you read — the Secret Origin of Captain America! A shocker!

SPOOF #2: Archie Bunkum lives! Don't miss "Brawl in the Family!" Plus — "Tarzan" the Apes," and some titillating "Tales from the Crypt!"

CHAMBER OF CHILLS #1: Harlan Ellison's "Delusion for a Dragon-Slayer!" And two more of the most macabre masterworks of all! 'Nuff said?

THE CLAWS OF THE CAT #1: The dream of a dedicated genius — or the nightmare of a twisted madman? Which will win in the battle for the soul of the masked huntress we call — the Cat? With the most mind-staggering final page yet!

Not to mention these Bringers of Wonderment:

FANTASTIC FOUR #128 (The battle to the finish with the Mole Man!) - AVENGERS #105 - HULK #157 (The Rhino returns!) - DAREDEVIL #93 - SUB-MARINER #55 - IRON MAN #52 - CONAN THE BARBARIAN #20 - TOMB OF DRACULA #5 (The Count takes a time-trip!) - KULL THE CONQUEROR #5 - NIGHT NURSE #1 - WEREWOLF BY NIGHT #2 - CAPTAIN MARVEL #23 - MARVEL PREMIERE #5 (Dr. Strange lives!) - MARVEL TEAM-UP #5 - MARVEL FEATURE #6 (Ant-Man and the Wasp - together again!) - CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #20 - RED WOLF #4 - AMAZING ADV. #15 - SGT. FURY #104 - and other winners too numerous (too humorous?) to mention! . . .

THIS IS
THE **CAT!**
-- WHO ELSE?

